

PhD programme

If you are thinking of pursuing a doctorate abroad, a Dutch higher education institution is one of your options. This brochure will give you information about PhD studies in Holland.

Excellent international research

The high quality of the research and the dissertations that are defended in Holland does place it in the very top ranks. In fact, Dutch international scientific research is leading in continental Europe. Holland occupies the fifth place in the world rankings of numbers of publications per capita.

In Holland, PhD students are allowed a large measure of freedom compared to other countries. Whether you find this an advantage or a disadvantage depends on your personal preference. If you like to be independent and free to make your own choices, the Netherlands might well be the right research environment for you.

In Holland the doctorate (PhD) is only offered at research universities and some institutions for international education. These institutions for international education work closely with one of the universities, so that the institutes can award an official doctorate.

Original research

Each PhD research project and dissertation must of course be original work, as candidates must always make an original contribution to the body of knowledge in his or her field. Conducting the research and writing the dissertation requires about four years in Holland, instead of the usual three years in many other countries. The dissertation is made public and is generally important enough to be reviewed in international journals in the field. The degree of doctor is awarded by Dutch higher education institutions at a traditional, centuries-old award ceremony. It is a solemn occasion that continues to express the ideals of science, which are to expand the frontiers of human knowledge.

Finding a supervisor

The moment you know you want to apply for a PhD position in Holland, you will have to start looking for a PhD supervisor, a professor who will support the proposal and be the official supervisor of the research. The best way to find a supervisor is through the international networks in your field. Your potential supervisor will be working at one of the Dutch institutions best known in your field. You can direct your inquiry to the central information office, who will be able to tell you what opportunities are available at the university or institute in question. Of course, your own professors are the first ones to ask for advice, and they may already have contacts with a Dutch university.

Quality control

The supervisor is not the only person responsible for research quality. Each university has a doctoral committee that has to approve every research proposal supported by a supervisor. Once the research has been done and the supervisor considers the dissertation ready for publication and oral defence, another committee of professors is appointed to read and approve the dissertation. This is the same committee that questions the candidate at the defence ceremony.

Requirements

Dutch academics have to meet high standards. It is important that candidates begin with a solid background in the theory and methods of their field. They must have an academic background comparable to their Dutch counterparts in the same field. You will need to have a recognized master's degree. Except perhaps in the first year, candidates will receive little or no additional formal teaching. And because candidates are required to be so independent, they must also have a lot of self-discipline. A good knowledge of languages is another requirement. Candidates from other countries generally choose to write their dissertations in English. This requires full mastery of English idiom and grammar. These language skills must be evident before the work on the dissertation begins.

Finally, the university will decide on whether to admit the candidate. PhD study is governed by the PhD regulations.

Research programmes

Dutch universities, often in cooperation with each other, conduct research programmes that include funds for PhD projects. In such cases, the research proposal is already written and the programme's organizers are looking for a PhD candidate to carry out the project. You then have to apply for the position as you would for any job. If candidates from other countries are sought, the position will be advertised internationally through notices in scientific journals, through letters at places where likely candidates are studying, and on the institution's own website.

Financing

Dutch institutions will receive and supervise PhD candidates who pay tuition fees. Each higher education institution has its own way of charging for supervision and for access to laboratories and other facilities. Fees also vary from one discipline to the next, depending on whether or not expensive equipment is required. Fees are generally somewhere between € 5,000 and € 10,000 a year. There is great variety in the fees and financial arrangements associated with studying for a PhD.

- Temporary position with salary

Candidates are invited to apply. To do this you should contact the institution in question directly. The website www.academictransfer.org lists vacancies for salaried positions.

- Fellowship
International organizations like the EU provide fellowships. Governments and employers sometimes also offer their own scholarships for PhD studies abroad. And finally, some of the host institutions in the Netherlands may also have funds for scholarships.
- Your own source of funding
Your inquiry should be directed to the institution you have chosen.

For more information about funding you can also look at www.grantfinder.nl, an online search engine which brings together a range of Dutch scholarships for international students.

More information

If you would like to know more, you are advised to make direct contact with one of the universities or institutes of international education. The website www.studyin.nl provides links to each of the higher education institutions and their various faculties. For more information, also visit the website of the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) at www.nwo.nl.

The names of the institutions that award doctorates are given below:

Government-funded Universities

Delft University of Technology
Erasmus University Rotterdam
Eindhoven University of Technology
Leiden University
Maastricht University
Radboud University Nijmegen
Tilburg University
Universiteit van Amsterdam
University of Groningen
University of Twente
Utrecht University
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
Wageningen University
Open University of the Netherlands

Government-approved Universities

Katholieke Theologische Universiteit te Utrecht
Theologische Faculteit Tilburg
Theologische Universiteit van de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken
Theologische Universiteit van de Gereformeerde Kerken
Theologische Universiteit van de Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijg.) Ned.
Transnationale Universiteit Limburg
Nyenrode Business Universiteit
University for Humanistics
University Nimbas - Graduate School of Management

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Nuffic, the Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education, was established in 1952.

Mission statement

Nuffic is a non-profit, professional organization aimed at making education accessible all over the world, especially in countries where educational infrastructure is lagging behind. Education is crucial for fostering global socio-economic development, improving the quality of life, and increasing intercultural understanding. Nuffic strives to be the intermediary between the education community of the Netherlands and the international community.

Nuffic's main areas of activity are:

- Development cooperation
- Internationalization of higher education
- International credential evaluation
- Marketing of Dutch higher education

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Dutch Institutes for International Education

IHS

Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies

ISS

Institute of Social Studies

ITC

International Institute for Geo-information Science and Earth Observation

MSM

Maastricht School of Management

UNESCO-IHE

Institute for Water Education